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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 001101

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/IPA (KNOPF) AND NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [AL](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: MOROCCO DOWNPLAYS NOVEMBER 26 ARAB LEAGUE
MINISTERIAL

REF: STATE 123317

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: MFA Director General Mohammed Azeroual told Polcouns November 23 that Morocco did not believe that the Cairo Ministerial would accomplish anything, and Morocco would be represented only by its Ambassador. The PLO is history and Fatah is weak and aging, he said. Any solution would need to involve Hamas. Morocco believed that serious efforts at Middle East confidence building were needed, and it was doing its part by inviting a number of past and present Israeli officials to an NGO-sponsored conference on the Mediterranean later in the week, where he and the Foreign Minister both would appear. End Summary.

¶2. (C) After review of reftel points, Azeroual was dismissive of the upcoming Cairo meeting. He noted that neither he nor his Minister would attend. Morocco would only send its Ambassador to the Arab League. He believed that the Egyptians had failed in their efforts to bring the Palestinians together and to stabilize the situation in Gaza. This was too delicate and political a task to confer entirely on Suleiman, or generally on intelligence channels.

¶3. (C) On the peace process, Azeroual said he shared the view, which he understood Secretary Rice recently expressed, that there will be no progress for a few months due to the upcoming Israeli elections. Morocco believed that a collective effort, by Arabs, Europeans, and Americans was needed to build confidence among the parties. Morocco will play a higher profile part in this. He said he would be attending a conference November 26-28 on Mediterranean unity and the conference would be opened by FM Fassi Fihri. He added "We have invited several senior Israelis." These are former, and most importantly, current officials, most of them of Moroccan origin, specifically (as heard):

-- Aharon Abramovich, his counterpart as Foreign Ministry Director General;

-- Yacoub Hadas Foreign Ministry Director for Middle East;

-- Tal Becker, Advisor to Livni (billed as advisor to Kadima);

-- Shlomo Benami, Former Foreign Minister;

-- Elie Barnavi, Former Israeli Ambassador in France.

¶4. (C) Comment: Azeroual's use of "we" in the invitation is not surprising, given the conference is put on by the Institut Amadeus, a think tank run by the son of the Foreign Minister. Israeli officials have passed through here before, ususally quietly, but this is the greatest concentration in recent memory. This effort does not appear to be dampened by protests in today's press about the attendance of Amir Peretz, former Israeli Defense Minister, at a recent

international labor meeting in Marrakech. Media today indicated that the Algerian conference invitees were pulling out due to the Israeli participation. Conference organizers said Spanish FM Moratinos was confirmed and due to speak at a panel including Israelis, Palestinians and Arab country officials. A panoply of Moroccan and other officials would address later, business development-oriented sessions. More information at www.institutamadeus.com. End comment.

15. (C) Azeroual said both Hamas and Fatah were responsible for the breakdown in the agreement between them. Morocco supported PA president Abbas, but he is weak and would not now win a free election in the West Bank. Fatah had not renewed itself, unlike the relatively young leadership of Hamas. It was now clear, he said, that any solution involving the Palestinians must include Hamas. He maintained the British, French and Spanish all had contacts with Hamas. Hamas was not just backed by the Iranians. It was getting significant support from through the Gulf, singling out Qatar, and from private donors there. Only Morocco had no official contacts, he said, while admitting he had "personal" contacts with Hamas.

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Riley